

## Handout #3: Communication Channels and Activities: Pros and Cons

From *Making Health Communication Programs Work*, National Cancer Institute, 2002:

Type of Channel	Activities	Pros	Cons
<b>Interpersonal Channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hotline counseling</li><li>• Patient counseling</li><li>• Instruction</li><li>• Informal discussion.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be credible</li><li>• Permit two-way discussion</li><li>• Can be motivational, influential, supportive</li><li>• Most effective for teaching and helping/caring.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be expensive</li><li>• Can be time-consuming</li><li>• Can have limited intended audience reach</li><li>• Can be difficult to link into interpersonal channels; sources need to be convinced and taught about the message themselves.</li></ul>
<b>Organizational and Community Channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town hall meetings and other events</li><li>• Organizational meetings and conferences</li><li>• Workplace campaigns.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be familiar, trusted, and influential</li><li>• May provide more motivation/support than media alone</li><li>• Can sometimes be inexpensive</li><li>• Can offer shared experiences</li><li>• Can reach larger intended audience in one place.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be costly, time consuming to establish</li><li>• May not provide personalized attention</li><li>• Organizational constraints may require message approval</li><li>• May lose control of message if adapted to fit organizational needs.</li></ul>

Type of Channel	Activities	Pros	Cons
<b>Mass Media Channels</b> <i>Newspapers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ads</li> <li>• Inserted sections on a health topic (paid)</li> <li>• News</li> <li>• Feature stories</li> <li>• Letters to the editor</li> <li>• Op/ed pieces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach broad intended audiences rapidly</li> <li>• Can convey health news/breakthroughs more thoroughly than TV or radio and faster than magazines</li> <li>• Intended audience has chance to clip, reread, contemplate, and pass along material</li> <li>• Small circulation papers may take PSAs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage demands a newsworthy item</li> <li>• Larger circulation papers may take only paid ads and inserts</li> <li>• Exposure usually limited to one day</li> <li>• Article placement requires contacts and may be time-consuming.</li> </ul>

Type of Channel	Activities	Pros	Cons
<b>Mass Media Channels</b> <i>Radio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ads (paid or public service placement)</li> <li>• News</li> <li>• Public affairs/talk shows</li> <li>• Dramatic programming (entertainment education).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of formats available to intended audiences with known listening preferences</li> <li>• Opportunity for direct intended audience involvement (through call-in shows)</li> <li>• Can distribute ad scripts (termed “live-copy ads”), which are flexible and inexpensive</li> <li>• Paid ads or specific programming can reach intended audience when they are most receptive</li> <li>• Paid ads can be relatively inexpensive</li> <li>• Ad production costs are low relative to TV</li> <li>• Ads allow message and its execution to be controlled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaches smaller intended audiences than TV</li> <li>• Public service ads run infrequently and at low listening times</li> <li>• Many stations have limited formats that may not be conducive to health messages</li> <li>• Difficult for intended audiences to retain or pass on material.</li> </ul>

Type of Channel	Activities	Pros	Cons
<b>Mass Media Channels</b> <i>Television</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ads (paid or public service placement)</li> <li>• News</li> <li>• Public affairs/talk shows</li> <li>• Dramatic programming (entertainment education).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaches potentially the largest and widest range of intended audiences</li> <li>• Visual combined with audio good for emotional appeals and demonstrating behaviors</li> <li>• Can reach low income intended audiences</li> <li>• Paid ads or specific programming can reach intended audience when most receptive</li> <li>• Ads allow message and its execution to be controlled</li> <li>• Opportunity for direct intended audience involvement (through call-in shows).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ads are expensive to produce</li> <li>• Paid advertising is expensive</li> <li>• PSAs run infrequently and at low viewing times</li> <li>• Message may be obscured by commercial clutter</li> <li>• Some stations reach very small intended audiences</li> <li>• Promotion can result in huge demand</li> <li>• Can be difficult for intended audiences to retain or pass on material.</li> </ul>

Type of Channel	Activities	Pros	Cons
<b>Mass Media Channels</b> <i>Internet</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web sites</li> <li>• E-mail mailing lists</li> <li>• Chat rooms</li> <li>• Newsgroups</li> <li>• Ads (paid or public service placement).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach large numbers of people rapidly</li> <li>• Can instantaneously update and disseminate information</li> <li>• Can control information provided</li> <li>• Can tailor information specifically for intended audiences</li> <li>• Can be interactive</li> <li>• Can provide health information in a graphically appealing way</li> <li>• Can combine the audio/visual benefits of TV or radio with the self-paced benefits of print media</li> <li>• Can use banner ads to direct intended audience to your program's Web site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be expensive</li> <li>• Many intended audiences do not have access to Internet</li> <li>• Intended audience must be proactive—must search or sign up for information</li> <li>• Newsgroups and chat rooms may require monitoring</li> <li>• Can require maintenance over time.</li> </ul>